

# GCSE FOOD PREPARATION AND NUTRITION

8585/C: Non-examined assessment  
Report on the Examination

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## **General comments**

The work for both NEA1 and NEA2 had developed from the previous year and there was an improvement in the understanding and interpretation of the marking criteria and the assessment objectives. The Teacher Online Standardisation materials supported centres in marking work to the AQA standard. The following report highlights the main observations seen in 2019. It was encouraging that the marking in most centres was generally accurate and fell within the tolerances set by AQA.

## **NEA1: Food Investigation**

The task involves investigating the working characteristics and the functional and chemical properties of ingredients through practical investigations. The tasks are based on the food science element of the specification on pages 18-21. The assessment is a report of 1500-2000 words.

### **Section A: Research**

There was good evidence of the use and application of prior knowledge gained through the learning activities taught during the specification. Where elements of the food investigation had been explicitly taught, through the delivery of the specification, students used these key skills and applied them to the non-exam assessment. Evidence of concise and focused research was seen. Diagrams were used well to explain the working characteristics, function and chemical properties of the ingredients. When students used a range of different sources to explain the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients, the work produced was impressive. It was encouraging to see the use of key subject terminology throughout the research, a development on the previous year. Students in the middle to the top of the mark range showed good analysis skills and summarised the information they had gained from their research clearly and succinctly. When students understood the research the planning of the investigations was done well with clear links to the hypothesis and research. There was an increased understanding of how to compose a hypothesis. There were improved links between research analysis, development of a hypothesis and justification of the investigations. Many centres used the previous advice from 2018 to present all the titles to teaching groups, which resulted in a less formulaic approach to the work.

### **Recommendations**

When one task was presented, evidence was seen of a more teacher led approach. This was particularly evident for the pastry task.

It is important that research is not copied directly from source. Students need to reference their sources throughout the report or include a bibliography.

Some aspects of research were irrelevant to the task. For example, some students produced in-depth research on the nutritional value of the ingredients or information on the secondary processing, which was not useful in planning the investigations.

The analysis of the research findings must be explicit. A review/analysis of the research is a method to be encouraged to ensure the findings are used when composing the hypothesis. Students should be encouraged to produce a summary of the scientific principles underlying the chosen tasks and use the findings to guide the planned investigations and analysis.

The research findings should be referred to throughout the food investigation tasks in order to achieve marks in the top mark band. In many cases there was a disconnect between the research and sections B and C.

The planned investigations must relate to the hypothesis or the research findings. When this was not done, it was an indication that students had not understood the research they gathered. Where reports were teacher led or formulaic, the hypotheses did not reflect the findings of the research undertaken.

Students need to justify the investigations they are planning to relate explicitly to the research findings.

### **Section B: Investigation**

When students had studied the food science element of the specification in depth, they could recall and apply the knowledge and understanding. This was used when planning and evaluating the investigations. Evidence of sound investigation work was seen across the entire mark range with various amounts of detail and breadth. Students showed good understanding of the use of fair testing in their investigations. When teaching the specification, it is good practice to carry out some examples of investigation work. This supports students' investigative skills and guides them in how to write up an investigation for the NEA tasks. Students who took a scientific approach towards the the food investigations demonstrated a good understanding of the working, chemical and functional properties of the ingredients used. These students also used subject-specific vocabulary throughout the non-examination assessment to an excellent standard. There was an increased range of recording methods, not just sensory testing, including: eg graphs, charts, annotated photographs. Sensory analysis continues to be the most popular testing method. The centres that did sensory analysis well identified appropriate descriptors for the sensory qualities tested. Students were able to identify the controls to ensure fair testing and applied them throughout the food investigations. There was some excellent investigative work produced for the 'proteins are used as a setting agent' task. The majority of centres followed AQA guidelines and produced photographic evidence of practical investigations and included name and student numbers in the photographs. Centres that provided strong photographic evidence assisted moderation greatly.

### **Recommendations**

The investigations must link to the research analysis and hypothesis, investigations often showed no relation to the research.

The investigation work must be fully explained and the research used to explain the working characteristics, function and chemical properties of the ingredients. Section B was over-rewarded in many centres.

Centres need to teach students different methods of recording practical investigations which can then be applied to the NEA. Students need to be taught the skill of recording the results and how to link back to the properties of ingredients rather than just focusing on sensory areas.

When students only carried out two investigations there was often a lack of breadth and depth of investigation work. Where centres choose to only pursue two investigations, they must be very detailed and thoroughly explored.

Students should not work in small groups throughout the entire NEA project. It is acceptable to produce some small group investigation work, but it is essential that students record their input and evaluate the results independently. It is prohibited to carry out food investigation tasks as a whole class.

### **Section C: Analysis and Evaluation**

There was evidence of good understanding of the underlying principles in food science and the functions of ingredients related to the individual tasks. Photographic evidence helped with the evaluation of practical outcomes and there was some excellent annotation evidenced by lower ability students. Excellent use of key subject vocabulary was evidenced throughout many projects.

Very good examples of analysis and evaluation were seen with clear understanding and explanation of what happened and, significantly, why it happened. When students related the findings back to their research, they could explain the working, characteristics, functional and properties of the ingredients. Analysis and evaluation were seen throughout the investigations rather than just included at the end of the project. There were some good links seen between the research findings, investigation findings and justified conclusions, particularly where students had clearly planned their own investigations.

There was evidence of very good use of ICT to communicate the reports and findings. The majority of centres adhered to the word count of 2000 words or used annotated photographs, tables and charts effectively to record results and reduce the overall wordcount.

### **Recommendations**

Links between the research, hypothesis and planned investigations need to be explicit throughout the report.

To achieve the top mark bands, students must include high level understanding and interpretation of the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients. Section C was marked too leniently in many centres. Students must also use subject specific terminology/vocabulary used throughout the report.

Section C should focus on evaluating and justifying the investigation findings. Many students did not refer to the hypothesis/prediction.

To reach the higher mark band students must explain how the food investigation results will be used when preparing and cooking food in the future. This continues to challenge many students. All centres must follow the requirements, regarding the word count of 1500-2000 words. This was not always the case. Students must not be allowed to exceed the capped word limit. When reviewing their work students should be encouraged to remove any irrelevant text and repetition and edit their work to fit within the word count.

A bibliography or alternative referencing of sources must be included in the report. This does not contribute to the word count.

## **NEA2: Food Preparation**

In this task, students prepare, cook and present three dishes to meet the needs of a specific context. Students will prepare, cook and present three dishes within a single period of 3 hours.

### **Section A: Researching the task**

Research was generally well executed and many students produced a wide range of interesting and relevant information, which was well referenced. Students used mainly secondary research sources to gather purposeful research to help select appropriate dishes. Some primary research such as interviews and visits provided some useful insights that helped inform ideas. Good practice was seen when clear aims were set for each piece of research, allowing for focused research which related explicitly to the task. There was some very effective research produced for the teenager task. However, in some cases research was irrelevant and was not linked to the dishes students chose to make. When recording the possible dishes, to make it is important to consider the technical skills to be used. Recording around six to eight ideas should allow for a good range of skills using different ingredients and processes. When students recorded their ideas in a table, this allowed for a focus on appropriateness of the dishes and linkage to the technical skills.

### **Recommendations**

- Research was not always analysed. This led to ideas being presented that were not relevant to the task. This was particularly the case for the teenager task where ideas were offered that were not that were not suitable/did not meet their nutritional needs or healthy eating guidelines.
- Research, when analysed, varied in quality. Often students failed to clearly state what they had found out and how they would use it. It would be helpful to include some analysis after the research to show the link between the research and the choice of dishes.
- Students moved onto Section B without considering a range of ideas related to the research findings. Students need to consider the dishes they wish to make carefully to enable a good range of technical skills to be demonstrated.
- When selecting the dishes, students need to select and justify a range of technical skills used in the making of the dishes – this continues to be an area for development. Students need to consider the dishes they make carefully to enable them to demonstrate a good range of technical skills.

### **Section B: Demonstrating technical skills**

When students were aware of different technical skills - basic, medium and complex, which are exemplified throughout the teaching of the specification - they produced some very good dishes. An adjustment to centre marks was required when there was a misunderstanding related to what constitutes complex technical skills.

Practical work for section B was much improved this year. There was excellent evidence that students had been well prepared both throughout KS3 and Year 10 and this was pleasing to see. The quality of practical work and the finish was impressive when demonstrating technical skills. Making which offered both complexity and demand was evidenced well. There was very little evidence of the heavy reliance on standard components. Even students lower down the mark range made their own pasta, pastry, wraps and breads. Good photographic evidence showed the quality of the dishes made. When students reviewed their technical skills, this generally resulted in

appropriate and justified final dishes. When photographic evidence of the actual skills being practiced was included, it assisted in supporting the written elements.

### **Recommendations**

Photographic evidence must be provided for this section. Moderation was difficult when no photographic evidence was available and limited qualitative commentary added to the students work.

### **Record Form**

Technical reviews for section B were often over-marked. It was clear that centres had awarded marks based purely on the dishes made and the skills demonstrated and omitted to realise that the quality of the written review should also be considered.

It is important that complex technical skills are executed to a high standard. Just because a student attempted to fillet fish does not automatically mean they will be given high marks.

The dishes need to include a range of skills and repetitive skills should be avoided, eg several dishes made using shortcrust pastry. For the Asian cuisine task, the selection of the ideas prevented some students from executing a wide range of skills, such as choosing to cook three different curries.

There was limited review of the technical skills. The making needs to be justified with a review of the technical skills.

Projects do not need to include methods of making. This is unnecessary and, in some cases, adds bulk to the work.

### **Section C: Planning for the final menu**

There was very good evidence of time plans that were detailed, realistic and logical. It was clear that students had spent time learning how to dovetail tasks. Very effective examples were seen when colour coding was introduced. There were good examples of detailed understanding of food safety in the time plans, but overall this continues to be an area for development. The lack of food hygiene and safety points was quite marked. Many centres interpreted safety as 'not cutting yourself' or 'using oven gloves'. Temperatures were often omitted and students did not always refer to cross contamination or personal hygiene in their time plan.

When students were able to clearly justify the choice of dishes, this allowed them to access the higher mark bands. Explicit links to the skills in Section B must be outlined. Justification was strong when students related back to their research and referred to nutrition, cooking methods, food provenance and sensory properties.

### **Recommendations**

Several centres misinterpreted the specification and the same dishes were made in sections B and D. This was highlighted as an issue the previous year. Students should not produce identical dishes and use Section B as a practice run for the making of the final dishes – this is clear on page 44 of the specification. However, it is acceptable and encouraged to use some of the same skills in the making of different dishes.

There must be clear links between each section of the NEA. Students were not always able to fully justify their recipe choices for the final dishes and presented detailed evaluation of section B but then did not link this to why the recipes for D were chosen.

When justifying the final dishes, students could refer to: research findings, technical skills and processes, cooking methods, sensory properties, presentation of the final dishes, nutritional value/healthy eating, food provenance and the cost of ingredients/portion size.

To achieve the top marks bands key food safety terminology and a wider use of key food safety temperatures should be included when producing the time plan.

### **Criterion D: Making the final dishes**

This section goes from strength to strength and there was some excellent work. It was clear that students had stepped up to the challenge and enjoyed this element of the NEA. Students worked hard in the 3-hour practical, demonstrating very good technical skills and presenting their work with a very good level of finish and decoration. There were some creative and imaginative practical dishes. Students had clearly gone to great efforts to present their dishes to a high level. Making was often supported by excellent photographic evidence. Centres that provided detailed and qualitative comments on the Candidate Record Form supported their students and this greatly assisted the moderation process.

### **Recommendations**

Students were incorrectly assessed as being in the top band when a wide range of complex skills and processes were not evident. The practical work produced for the top band must be complex and challenging.

To achieve high making marks, students need to show a comprehensive range of making skills. Low skill products and reliance on standard components cannot achieve marks in the top mark bands.

Teacher annotation must provide qualitative comments related to the making ability of students, not just copied statements from the marking criteria. It can be difficult for moderators to validate the centre marks without qualitative comments related to students' making skills. The quality of some of the Candidate Record Forms was disappointing and did not support the work students had produced.

When students repeated the same three dishes in Section B and Section D, this limited the marks that could be awarded for this section.

Some dishes were poorly executed and/or finished, yet awarded high marks.

To authenticate students' technical skills, photographic evidence should be clearly marked with the student's name and/or number.

The three final dishes must be presented and photographed together.

## **Section E: Analyse and evaluate**

Sensory testing was carried out well with detailed analysis and evaluation included. Detailed, relevant and creative improvements were suggested for the final dishes. The key element to this marking criterion is that students demonstrate an excellent knowledge of nutrition by fully explaining and drawing conclusions from the nutritional data.

### **Recommendations**

Students need to explain the nutritional data and costing. Marks were given for the production of data rather than analysis and evaluation.

Section E was over rewarded in many centres. To achieve the top band, accurate and excellent knowledge of nutrition is required. In many cases, a nutrition chart was presented with no reasoning/explanation yet awarded marks in the top bands.

Timing was an issue for some centres and this section may not have had the time devoted that was required to ensure the marking criteria was sufficiently covered.

### **General points**

The quality of work produced for NEA2 goes from strength to strength. There were examples of some impressive work produced by students and the quality of practical skills was excellent. NEA1 the Food investigation continues to be challenging for students. Explicit teaching of the skills required for this task should be implemented into schemes of learning.

For both tasks there need to be links between the sections, each section should not be seen in isolation.

To authenticate student's technical skills photographic evidence should be clearly marked with the student's name and/or number.

Unfortunately, several centres over rewarded particularly for NEA2. High mark projects should be exemplary. All elements of each marking criterion should be comprehensively addressed. The portfolio must have rigour and fully justify all decisions made. The practical element should be inclusive of a range of complex skills finished to a high standard.

Centres are reminded that the NEA2 time allocation is not to exceed 20 hours (including the 3-hour final assessment within a single block period). All centres must follow the requirements, regarding the word count of 1500-2000 words for NEA 1.

Reports with missing photographic evidence or photographs with no explanation in the reports or on the Student Record Forms made it difficult to moderate the samples.

In some cases, there was no evidence of making in folders and marks were awarded.

Making both in Section B and D remained a strength of many students work and it was pleasing to see that the majority of students rose to the challenge of the both the technical skills challenge and the 3 hour final practical. The quality of work when demonstrating technical skills and the quality of finish of the practical work in the 3 hour exam was generally quite impressive. Students produced high quality dishes which demonstrated a wide range of complex technical skills/processes.

Students of all abilities demonstrated good technical skills which they used in the preparation and cooking of a range of dishes.

NEA Advisers are available to support teachers with the interpretation of the NEA requirements. NEA Advisers can answer questions related to both elements, but they are not permitted to comment on students' work.

Centres are encouraged to view the exemplar materials on the Teacher Online Standardisation (TOLS) which is accessible through e-AQA. This will help with the successful interpretation of the marking criteria and marking to the AQA standard.

### **Administration and Assessment**

Moderators reported an increase in the number of administrative errors with the addition of NEA marks requiring correspondence with examination offices.

Larger centres must adopt rigorous internal standardisation procedures to ensure consistent application of the standard across all students' work.

Many centres provided detailed justification of the marks for Section B and D of NEA2, unfortunately this was lacking in others.

Photographic evidence must be of the dishes/investigation/technical skills only. Photographs of students must not be included in the reports.

External social media sources are not AQA endorsed and centres should seek guidance and support from AQA NEA Advisers.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.